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NEWSLETTER

December 2024



Illustration credit: J-PAL

Celebrating fifteen years of J-PAL LAC

This year, [J-PAL Latin America and the Caribbean \(LAC\)](#) celebrates its 15th anniversary, marking a decade and a half of advancing evidence-informed policy and building partnerships across the region. In a new blog series, the LAC team writes about some of the most exciting funding, research, and policy collaborations of recent years, and shares a few key lessons learned.

[Read more](#)

NEW COLLABORATIONS

Advancing evidence-informed policy decisions in the UK

Last month, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)'s Evaluation Unit, J-PAL, and Innovations for Poverty Action launched the Strategic Impact Evaluation and Learning (SIEL) program, a new collaboration aimed at embedding rigorous evidence into policy decisions within FCDO. At the launch event, [Esther Duflo](#) (MIT; Director, J-PAL; Scientific Director, J-PAL South Asia), Adnan Khan (Chief Economist, FCDO), and Charlotte Watts (Chief Scientific Advisor, FCDO) discussed the essential role of evidence in policymaking and how SIEL will enhance the effectiveness and value for money of FCDO programs—improving lives of people reached by FCDO worldwide. [Read more »](#)

Supporting cost-effectiveness of USAID programs

Last week, J-PAL as part of a global consortium of research institutions led by the Center for Effective Global Action at the University of California, Berkeley announced a partnership that will contribute vital evidence to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) over the next five years. The partnership aims to dramatically improve the cost-effectiveness of USAID's efforts to fight global poverty and promote economic growth. Promoting Impact and Learning with Cost-Effectiveness Evidence (PILCEE) will bring together a worldwide network of researchers to guide USAID's work by evaluating the impacts of Agency-funded programs and synthesizing findings from the growing evidence base. [Read more »](#)

NEW POLICY INSIGHT



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Expanding household electricity access

In a new Policy Insight, J-PAL's [Environment, Energy, and Climate Change sector](#) summarizes evidence from fourteen rigorous evaluations to understand how access to electricity, which has been associated with higher living standards, impacts household well-being.

Policy issue: Energy is a critical ingredient for improving households' well-being, but over 680 million people worldwide do not have electricity in their homes and instead rely on fuels that can harm human health and the environment. Despite a longstanding association between higher energy use and higher living standards, there is no clear research consensus on how electricity access affects household well-being.

Results: While some quasi-experimental research has shown that increasing energy access has boosted employment and income long term, more recent randomized evaluations found minimal impacts of grid and off-grid solar access on household welfare in

the short term. The evidence shows that electricity access is just one component of reducing poverty, rather than a complete solution on its own. [Read more »](#)

FEATURED MULTIMEDIA



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Evidence to Policy: Improving housing mobility for low-income families in the US

Research in the United States found that providing school quality information to Housing Choice Voucher recipients searching for rental listings online helped increase moves to neighborhoods with higher performing, less segregated schools. In this J-PAL Evidence to Policy video, researchers and implementers discuss how AffordableHousing.com used these results to inform the scaling of offering school-quality information to all of its 60,000 daily site users. [Watch the video »](#)

Research by: Peter Bergman (University of Texas, Austin), Eric Chan (Babson College), and Adam Kapor (Princeton University)



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VoxDev Talk: Tavneet Suri on strengthening farmers' resilience to climate change

In a recent VoxDev podcast, J-PAL affiliated professor [Tavneet Suri](#) (MIT; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Agriculture sector) discusses key lessons from a new [J-PAL Policy Insight](#) that finds that in the face of worsening weather shocks due to climate change, social assistance programs can complement agricultural technologies to improve small-scale farmers' resilience. Tavneet reviews the evidence and shares how policymakers can support farmers' adaptation to growing weather threats. [Listen to the episode »](#)

FEATURED BLOG



Photo credit: Miranda Aisha Putri, J-PAL

Learnings from the field: Measuring early childhood development

In Indonesia, around 20 percent of children are stunted, or experience delayed growth that negatively impacts their cognitive and physical development. An ongoing evaluation supported by [J-PAL Southeast Asia](#) aims to measure the potential of home-based growth charts to combat stunting. In a blog post, surveyors shared their on-the-ground experiences using a new children's development measurement tool as part of the evaluation. Key lessons include the importance of building trust with children during the assessment, developing clear and adaptable field protocols, and incorporating local contexts. [Read more »](#)

Research by: Günther Fink (Swiss TPH, University of Basel), Milda Irhamni (University of Indonesia), Doug Parkerson (Innovations for Poverty Action), Peter Rockers (Boston University), and Gumilang Aryo Sahadewo (Gadjah Mada University)

AFRICAN SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT



Governments and NGOs implement numerous projects and programs aimed at improving living standards, but as an economist, I often ask myself: Do these projects impact the target groups?"



Mohammed Tanko on how he has benefited from the African Scholars Program

 **Tamale, Ghana**

In our latest [African Scholar Spotlight](#), Mohammed Tanko, a lecturer and researcher at the University for Development Studies in Ghana, discusses how J-PAL has supported several of his pilot studies and provided training in the skills needed to run impact evaluations. He also provides tips for Scholars interested in applying for J-PAL initiative funding. [Read more »](#)

WELCOMING OUR NEW AFFILIATED PROFESSORS

This summer, we welcomed 35 talented researchers to the J-PAL network. We will feature a few of them here each month.



Erin Kelley
University of Chicago



Muhammad Yasir Khan
University of Pittsburgh



Dmitry Taubinsky
University of California,
Berkeley

FEATURED EVENTS

Upcoming webinar: Boosting Employment and Earnings through Skills Signaling

 **December 12**

Join J-PAL's [Labor Markets sector](#) for a webinar hosted by the International Labor Organization's Global Initiative for Decent Jobs for Youth on certifying and signaling skills to improve employment and earnings for job seekers. J-PAL affiliated professor [Stefano Caria](#) (University of Warwick; Co-Chair, J-PAL's Labor Markets sector) and [Natalie Valent](#) (Senior Policy Associate, J-PAL Global) will highlight findings from their recent [J-PAL Policy Insight](#) on the topic, and Melanie Lambert (Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator) will share practical strategies learned from skill signaling interventions in South Africa. [Register now](#) »

J-PAL at the Paris Peace Forum: The Future of African Agriculture

Paris, France

In November, J-PAL and the Center for Effective Global Action's [Agricultural Technology Adoption Initiative \(ATAI\)](#) and the Agricultural Transitions Lab for African Solutions co-hosted an event at the Paris Peace Forum that brought together ATAI-funded researchers, policymakers, international organizations, and private sector stakeholders. Panelists shared evidence-informed solutions to pressing challenges facing small-scale farmers in Africa and identified actionable policy opportunities to drive sustainable agricultural development on the continent. [Watch the event recording »](#)

Highlights from the Jobs for Development Conference

Cairo, Egypt

In October, J-PAL [Middle East and North Africa](#) hosted the Jobs for Development Conference at the American University in Cairo. The conference brought together around 100 policymakers, practitioners, and researchers from the region and around the world to discuss job challenges in low- and middle-income countries. Over fifty research presentations on youth employment, gender, and leveraging technological change were shared to advance global knowledge on jobs and development policies. [Watch the event recording »](#)

FEATURED TRAINING

Open enrollment for the DEDP MicroMasters Program

Term starts January 21

The MicroMasters Program in [Data, Economics, and Design of Policy \(DEDP\)](#) program is open for enrollment, with the next series of courses starting on January 21. The online courses cover a variety of topics, including development economics, public policy, and data analysis. Anyone who completes the DEDP MicroMasters credential can apply for an

accelerated master's program at MIT or one of the pathway universities. Courses are free to audit, with the option to pay to upgrade for a proctored exam in pursuit of a course certificate. [Enroll today »](#)

 **MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS**

[From refugee to MIT graduate student](#)
MIT News

[J-PAL North America announces new evaluation incubator collaborators from state and local governments](#)
MIT News

[Infosys Science Foundation announces prize winners for 2024, two women among six winners](#)
The Hindu

[Soft skills: The missing piece in employability](#)
Hindustan Times

[Cash incentives boost insurance enrollment but fail to secure long-term retention in Thailand](#)
DevDiscourse

 **NEW RESEARCH PAPERS**

[Empowering Adolescents to Transform Schools: Lessons from a Behavioral Targeting](#)
Sule Alan and Elif Kubilay

[Randomized Entry](#)
Francis Annan

A Scalable Approach to High-Impact Tutoring for Young Readers

Kalena E. Cortes, Karen Kortecamp, Susanna Loeb, and Carly D. Robinson

Critical Thinking and Misinformation Vulnerability: Experimental Evidence from Colombia

John A. List, Lina M. Ramirez, Julia Seither, Jaime Unda, and Beatriz H. Vallejo

FEATURED JOBS

Communications Associate, São Paulo, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Bahia, Brazil

Research Associate (Education), Rabat, Morocco

Policy Associate (AI for Social Good), Bengaluru, Karnataka or New Delhi, Delhi, India

Policy Associate (Health), New Delhi, Delhi, India

Finance and Operations Manager, Jakarta, Indonesia

Manager (Economic Pathways), Cambridge, MA, US

Senior Research, Education, and Training Associate, Cambridge, MA, US

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